

ZOOLOGY OF THE HIGH PLAINS: PART II—BIRDS AND
MAMMALS

BIRDS (BIBLIOGRAPHY) AND MAMMALS

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Birds

Virtually no collecting of bird specimens has been done on the Victorian high plains. Since 1900, however, a number of papers and notes relating to field observations of birds at various high plains localities have been published in natural history and ornithological societies' journals. Birds are a popular study for the field naturalist. As a result the ornithologist at once reaps the benefit of other people's observations and the problem of assessing their reliability.

To ignore field records that are unrelated to collected specimens as a general principle would be to disregard a large part of ornithological literature. In well-worked areas, where observers are numerous, field lists are constantly subjected to the critical examinations of experienced observers and most errors are ultimately corrected. No such safeguard can yet be claimed for an area as little studied as the high plains.

The present paper has two aims:

- (a) to draw attention to the meagreness of existing information on the bird life of the area;
- (b) to initiate a bibliography relating to the avifauna of the Victorian high plains as elsewhere defined.

With regard to the first of these aims, one or two points which emerge from perusal of published notes promote comment. The area in which most observations have been made is, not unexpectedly, Mt Buffalo Plateau. In all published notes the species for which records are claimed are chiefly common ones that are typical of grassland, woodland, and sclerophyll forests of lower altitudes. There is nothing to suggest that the relatively very small part of Australia falling within the Victorian high plains definition is, or has been, a centre of bird speciation. It is not to be expected that any bird species will be confined to the high plains. Some subspeciation, or at least altitudinal variation may occur but this can be determined only by collecting.

The classification of vegetation types outlined by Beadle and Costin (1952) seems very suitable for use in recording bird habitats. It is hoped that a terminology for alpine bird habitats acceptable to botanists in terms of vegetation types can be agreed upon and that future observers will use it in recording existing bird habitat relationships.

Concerning the second aim, it should be understood that the present short bibliography in no way aspires to completeness but is intended as a basic list. The author would welcome critical comment, additional references, or guidance to other lists whether published or not. Acceptance of species records by any author is not to be inferred by inclusion of the reference in the bibliography.

It is trusted that the authors included will not mind the critical atmosphere in which their contribution is listed but will recognize that knowledge of birds of the region is still in the 'melting pot' stage.

Mammals

Victorian mammalogists advise that so far there are no scientifically acceptable records relating to the high plains. References to such species as the fox, dingo, and wombat occur in popular literature. Unlike ornithology, mammalogy has not enjoyed the assistance of societies devoted to the study of its own animals and providing a core of general knowledge which ensures some degree of reliability in field records. There is, therefore, a striking need for both collecting and reliable field recording of mammals on the high plains.

Annotated Bibliography Relating to Birds of the Victorian High Plains

PUBLISHED

- ALICE, GUIDE—see MILLER, BLANCHE, E., 1946.
- BUTCHART, M., 1959. The Bogong High Plains, birds. *Vict. Nat.* 76: 214. (38 species claimed)
- CAMPBELL, A. G., 1946. Mount Buffalo National Park. *Bird Observers' Club Monthly Notes*, August. (On need for conservation)
- GITTENS, JOHN, 1958. Late nesting on the Bennison High Plains. *The Bird Observer* No. 317, April. (9 species mentioned, breeding records for 7 claimed)
- GITTENS, JOHN, 1958. Birds of the Bennison High Plains. *The Bird Observer* No. 324, November. (Records claimed for over 70 species including large-billed scrub-wren)
- GUIDE, ALICE—see MILLER, BLANCHE, E., 1946.
- HODGSON, L. L., 1927. On the Buffalo Plateau. *Vict. Nat.* 44: 188-196. (Chiefly botanical, some 15 bird species claimed)
- HANKS and STEWART, 1948. Birds of Buffalo. *Bird Observers' Club Monthly Notes*, May. (44 species claimed. Typographical corrections in issue of June, 1948)
- LE SOUEF, D., 1907. Bird life on the Buffalo Mountains in March. *Emu* 7: 40-41. (Brief notes on a number of species. Black falcon record claimed)
- McHAFFIE, A. F. W., 1904. The Buffalo Mountains camp-out: Ornithology. *Vict. Not.* 20: 148-150. (26 species, altitude and habitats indefinite. Superb parrot record claimed)
- MILLER, BLANCHE E., 1946. Notes on some of the birds on Mount Buffalo. *Bird Observers' Club Monthly Notes*, August. (Brief notes on a number of species including reference to superb parrot, large-billed scrub-wren, and to a booklet of photographs of 'The Lyrebirds of Mount Buffalo' by Guide Alice)
- O'DONOGHUE, J. G., 1914. Excursion to Baw Baw. Ornithology. *Vict. Nat.* 30: 207. (Baw Baw Plateau, 30 + species, bare list)
- PATTERSON, A., 1928. Notes made during a visit to the Bogong High Plains, Victoria. *Emu* 28: 66-69. (Number of species discussed, habitats and altitude indefinite)
- STEWART, H. C. E., 1939. Flower and feather at Mount Buffalo. *Vict. Nat.* 55: 190-194. (Chiefly botanical, about 20 bird species)
- STEWART, H. C. E., 1939. Flower and feather at Mount Buffalo National Park. *Reprint (Victorian Railways, May 1939)* of article *Vict. Nat.* 55: 190-194 in slightly different form, 6 pages, probably rare.
- STEWART, H. C. E., 1942. Distribution of *Gymnorhina*. *Vict. Not.* 58: 196.
- STEWART, H. C. E., 1944. Bird life on Mount Buffalo. *Vict. Not.* 61: 69-73. ('Some seventy species' claimed, 4,000-5,600 ft, notes include reference to habitat)
- STEWART, H. C. E., 1944. *Bird Observers' Club Monthly Notes*, February. (Mt Buffalo, brief notes on a number of species)
- STEWART, H. C. E., 1945. Movements of the little grebe. *Bird Observers' Club Monthly Notes*, June. (Mt Buffalo)

- STEWART, H. C. E., 1946. Nature in a woodshed. *Vict. Nat.* 62: 210. (Breeding record for *Sericornis magnirostris* on Mt Buffalo Plateau claimed)
- STEWART, H. C. E., 1948. Mountain miniatures, No. 1. *Vict. Nat.* 64: 212-213. (Record of spotted quail-thrush claimed for Mt Buffalo)
- STEWART, H. C. E., 1951. *Bird Observers' Club Monthly Notes*, February. (First record of welcome swallow claimed for Mt Buffalo, 4,500 ft)
- STEWART, H. C. E., 1951. Flower and feather at Mt Buffalo National Park. *Victorian Railways Print* 931-51, (20 pages) with foreword by A. G. Campbell. The bird section includes a list of 34 species, with notes, claimed for areas above 4,000 ft.
- TADGELL, ALFRED J., 1926. Mount Fainter and beyond. *Vict. Nat.* 43: 33-47. (A few species mentioned)
- T.A.J., and H.A.G. (TADGELL and HOOKE?), 1926. Some birds of the mountain tops. *Vict. Nat.* 42: 307-308. (Several species over 5,000 ft, various localities)
- TRANter, G. W., 1929. Notes on a trip to the Omco District and Mt Hotham, North-Eastern Victoria. *Emu* 29: 140-142. (Brief notes on a number of species)
- WAKEFIELD, N. A., 1959. The large-billed scrub-wren in Victoria. *Vict. Nat.* 75: 157. (Claim that the breeding record of this species for Mt Buffalo [see Hodgson, Stewart, and Miller] was in error for that of *Sericornis frontalis*)
- WIGAN, (Miss) M. L., 1941. Notes on Mt Buffalo. *Vict. Nat.* 57: 159-160. (19 species mentioned)
- WILSON, F. E., 1928. Some alpine birds. *Vict. Nat.* 44: 296. (Bogong High Plains, 20+ species with reference to habitat and altitude, one or two species not claimed by other observers)
- UNPUBLISHED
- CAMPBELL, A. G.—Some notes: Mt Buffalo 1951. MS. Nat. Mus. Vic. (25 species mentioned)
- CHALWELL, FRED V.—(Former resident of Mt Buffalo and accomplished local bushman) 5 letters (193?-1942) to H. C. E. Stewart relating to Mt Buffalo birds. Nat. Mus. Vic.
- CHISHOLM, A. H.—1 letter (1939) to H. C. E. Stewart concerning lyrebird (nesting) and lorikeets. Nat. Mus. Vic.
- MILLER, BLANCHE E.—2 letters (1946) to H. C. E. Stewart relating chiefly to nest claimed as that of large-billed scrub-wren. Nat. Mus. Vic.
- STEWART, H. C. E.—Census of birds at Mt Buffalo National Park. MS. Nat. Mus. Vic. 89 species are claimed as recorded within the National Park confines. This list supersedes the published lists by this author listed elsewhere in the present bibliography and is the result of field observations made at intervals over many years. The localities are, in general, within the limits of the high plains definition. Breeding records are claimed for some species. This is the most comprehensive species list compiled for any part of the high plains. It includes references to earlier papers. The author is a careful observer and the annotations to the list show evidence of his endeavours to achieve reliability.
- WILKINSON, ERIC—MS. list claiming 22 species records at various localities. Includes altitude and habitat notes. Nat. Mus. Vic.

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References

- BEADLE, N. C. W., and COSTIN, A. B., 1952. Ecological classification and nomenclature. *Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W.* 77: 61-82.